

School Library Access (SLA) Mini-Grants

Grant Management Best Practices

- **Grant Admin:** At the start of the school year, establish a grant file (digital or hardcopy). Make a copy of your grant award letter and grant agreement and keep the copies in your grant file as these docs list the grant requirements, the report deadlines and the ICfL website address. We recommend you bookmark the following web page as it is full of grant-specific resources: <http://libraries.idaho.gov/school-access-mini-grants>. Read the grant award letter and the full grant agreement and be sure you understand the terms and requirements. Contact ICfL if have any questions.
- **Grant Reporting:** Place the report deadlines on the calendar you use regularly. Give yourself a pre-deadline date as well so you have time to gather the required information for the report. Print out and read both grant report docs at the start of the school year so you know what data/info to collect from the beginning of the grant period and you will have no surprises at report deadline time. Be prepared to work with your school district office to answer some report questions.
- **The Grantee:** This grant is awarded to the school district so the official grantee is the district, not the school, the principal or the librarian. When the grant report requests the initials of the “grantee,” an authorized representative from the school district should sign this section of the report.
- **Getting the Funds:** For all grantees who return their signed grant agreements by September 15th, grant funds will be disbursed to the school district by September 16th. Some school districts may receive funding before the 15th of the month. As the funds are disbursed, the primary contact will receive an email stating this to be the case. Within one day of the disbursement email, most funds will be sent electronically to your school district (some may be sent in the mail as a paper warrant – this depends on how your school district is set up in the statewide vendor system). When the contact receives the email stating that the funds have been disbursed, this person should check with your SD contact to be sure the funds have been received and placed in the account designated for this project, as you will have previously discussed with your SD contact.
- **Grant Spending Deadline:** The grant period ends April 13, 2017. **This means that all grant funds should be spent (obligated AND paid for) BEFORE April 13th.** The best practice to employ in order to make this happen is to give yourself and your accounting office an internal deadline of approximately March 15th to spend (obligate and pay for) the grant funds. This will allow you wiggle room for late shipments of books, back-order books and personnel changes/vacation time at the school/accounting office – all reasons previous grantees have stated for not spending all the funds prior to the April deadline. **By April 13th, YOU SHOULD HAVE ZERO DOLLARS AND ZERO CENTS LEFT IN GRANT FUNDS.** Consider spending \$1-\$10 dollars over the grant award amount in order to make this true.
- **Grant Fund Tracking:** If grant funds will be held by the school district, establish a contact person at the district office who will help you track the expenditures of the grant and who will help you with both grant reports. Meet with this person before you spend

any funds and be sure you understand how the tracking will occur (each school district does it a little differently). If the grant funds will be transferred to your individual school, meet with the person who is responsible for school expenditures and follow the same steps as above. Make sure this person has a copy of the grant agreement and award letter. Together, review the requirement that the grantee must keep accounting records for this grant for 3 years after the close of the grant. (The grant is closed on April 14, 2017 therefore grant expenditure receipts and any other grant-related document/records shall be kept on file until April 15, 2020.) Ask them about receiving a Transaction Detail report of the grant expenditures once a month, once a quarter, or 2 weeks before each report (this depends on your needs and the school districts' capacity). You will need a Transaction Detail report, (or use report option #2) of the grant funds for both the Interim Report and again for the Final Report.

- **Buying Books:** Aim to get all the funds spent and the books bought in the first semester. Please consider using the vetted non-fiction book list provided on the ICfL website as a starting place. It is encouraged that you do not wait until February or March to buy the bulk of your books because then there is little school year left to circulate these new books amongst the students (and fewer results to report back in April when the final report is due). Back-orders can become an issue with late book ordering.
- **Book Vendors:** Some grantees have chosen to work with a one book vendor and spend all their grant funds with a single book order while others have chosen to work with multiple book vendors and have placed up to 25 separate book orders. We have observed that working with 2-3 book vendors and placing 3-5 book orders over the course of the first 3-4 months of the grant is the best practice. It ensures high-quality, diverse title purchases, allows grantees to benefit from multiple discounts and spreads the work-load over a reasonable amount of time.
- **Check-Out Policy:** You don't have to wait until your new books come in to implement your new check-out policy for pre K, K and 1st graders. In fact, past recipients have found it works best to get their youngest library users accustomed to checking out and returning books by practicing on a limited set of older library books. That way when the new books come in, there is less book loss since the students have had time to practice.

Questions? Any time you, your principal or school district contact has questions about this grant and the processes recommended above, please do not hesitate to contact us at ICfL:

Stephanie Bailey-White, Read To Me Project Coordinator at stephanie.bailey-white@libraries.idaho.gov or (208) 334-2150 – primarily for questions having to do with book titles, book vendors, check-out implementation, communicating changes with parents of students or general questions.

Kristina Taylor, Grants/Contracts Officer at kristina.taylor@libraries.idaho.gov or (208) 334-2150 - primarily for questions having to do with financials, receiving your funds, tracking your funds, working with school district personnel, grant report forms or general questions.